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ABSTRACT

This booklet on study skills for entering college students provides direction on the following topics: using time, textbooks, notetaking, exams, reports and essays, libraries, and getting help. Questions the student should consider about scheduling time and sample daily/weekly/quarterly schedules are included. Textbook reading should consist of surveying, questioning, reading, reciting, and reviewing the material. Listening and recording notes in a usable way and academic and psychological preparation for tests are discussed. The most common types of test questions are discussed, including multiple choice, true-false, matching, computational or numerical, short answer, and essay. Basic reference materials in the library, the card catalog, periodical indexes, and newspaper indexes are described, and the use of quotes and footnotes in papers is discussed. Sources of help for General College students at the University of Minnesota are the reading and writing skills center, mathmatics skills center, counseling and student develcpment, and HELP center. (SW)

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STUDY SURVIVAL KIT

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UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
TWIN CITIES

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To the General College Student:

Welcome to the General College. Life here in General College, like life most places, is mostly enjoyable, a hodgepodge of things--some easy, some hard; some dull, some exciting; and some tiring, some envigorating. Basic to it all, though, is study. And how well you study, how efficiently you create and use study time, will determine to a large extent how enjoyable, rewarding, and successful your months or years as a college student will be.

That's what this booklet is all about: study. Whether you are just beginning college or are already a successful student, we think you'll find this booklet helpful. If you will glance over the table of contents, you will see that there are helpful hints here on those basic skills you'll need to succeed--or even survive--in school. Read the booklet, please. Return to it when you need to, when a given chapter seems useful. We know as well as you that there is no simple magic formula for success in college or anywhere else. But time spent with this little booklet should pay off for you in better grades and a more satisfying experience in the General College.

A final word: Note that at the end of the booklet there is a request for your comments. We would sincerely appreciate your reactions to any part of the booklet.

Sincerely,

Terence Collins

John L. Romano

N.B. Yet another final word! We owe special thanks to David W. Williams, Assistant Dean for Student Affairs, for funding this booklet and for overseeing its production.

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USING TIME - OR, BEAT THE CLOCK BEFORE IT BEATS YOU

Something's got to give! General College students usually do not have the luxury of attending school and doing nothing else. They often have to work, perhaps care for children, attend to a home or apartment, and generally carry on with their lives in addition to going to classes and studying. Therefore, it is important that you as a student learn how to best fulfill the demands of your commitments in the amount of time available to you.

In a seven-day week, there are 168 total hours. Most people will spend about half of this--84 hours--sleeping, eating, traveling to and from school, etc. That leaves about 84 hours for your other commitments and activities. How will you spend your time?

Answer these questions for yourself:

1. How many hours are you spending as a student?
2. Do these hours allow for class attendance (12-15 hours per week for a full-time student)?
3. Do these hours allow for preparation and study time (for each hour in class, two hours outside of class, making 24-30 hours per week of study for a full-time student)?
4. Is your total time as a full-time student between 36 and 45 hours per week? (Add or subtract hours if you are taking more than 15 credits or less than 12 credits.)

If your answer to question 4 is No, you probably are not committing enough of your time to your role as a student. You have several options available:

--Rearrange your time commitments and roles so that the student role is increased to at least 25% and some other roles decreased.

--Reduce your academic credit load and thereby reduce your role as a student.

--Stay with your present time arrangements and risk doing poorly in one or more of your courses.

The choice of how you spend your time is up to you. You are the master of your time. However, you can make good use of your time by following some basic principles:

1. Be realistic about what you can get done in the time available to you. The old axiom "Don't bite off more than you can chew" applies here.
2. Plan ahead. Develop a daily, weekly, and quarterly schedule and try to keep to it. More about these schedules below.
3. Be aware that being a full-time student will usually require that you give up some activities that you did when you were not a student. Something's got to give.

One of the best ways to keep track of and control your time is by keeping time schedules.

Schedules can initially make you aware of how you spend your time and secondly, provide a guide to help you plan what you want to do. As a student you might be helped by two basic types of schedules.

1. DAILY/WEEKLY SCHEDULE to record how you plan to spend your time during a given day and week. An example of such a schedule for a sample GC student follows on Grid 1.

GRID 1

Week of October 15, 1978

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
6- 7 a.m.							
7- 8							
8- 9		Study 1431 in Math Skills Center →					
9-10		GC 1431	1431	1431	1431	1431	
10-11		Math Skills center	SWIM	Get background for 1211 group at library	SWIM	Math Skills center	
11-12							
12- 1 p.m.		GC 1421				Review for 1421 quiz	
1- 2	Study 1211 at home	↓ write theme at library		GC 1421	Study for Quiz	GC 1421	
2- 3			GC 1211 ↓	Revise theme in Skills Ctr	GC 1211 ↓	GC 1211	
3- 4							
4- 5	Study 1421 at home						
5- 6		WORK		WORK		WORK	WORK
6- 7		↓		↓		↓	↓
7- 8							
8- 9			Study 1211 at home		Study 1211 at home		
9-10							
10-11							
11-12							

Notice that this student is taking 14 credits and has allowed 28 hours (2 x 14) for study. It is important to be specific about what and where you will study when making a schedule. Avoid simply using the more general word "study." This student is also working at a job 24 hours per week. The blank spaces can be filled in with other commitments and activities (for example: recreation, travel, meals, personal care, relationships, etc.). Using this as a model, develop a schedule for yourself including your other activities and commitments, taking into account whether yours is a demanding or less demanding academic load, something which will vary from quarter to quarter.

2. QUARTERLY SCHEDULE to record important duties throughout the quarter. This schedule need not be as detailed as a daily/weekly schedule but should include dates of quizzes and examinations, reports and papers due, last day of the quarter, and important personal matters. Most instructors will provide a class schedule during the first week of classes. Sit down then to make up your overall quarter schedule. An example of this type of schedule follows on Grid 2.

GRID 2
An example of one student's quarterly schedule

Fall Quarter, 1978

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
September	24	25	26	27 Dentist	28	1421 29 paper due	30
October	1	2	3	4	1431 test 5	6	7
	Church 8 supper	1421 9 paper due	10	11 Dentist	12	13	14
	15	16	17	1421 18 paper due	1431 test 19	1211 20 Test #1	21
	22	video- 23 tape 1211	24	25 Dentist	26	1421 27 paper due	28
	29	30	Party 31 for Kids	1	1431 test 2	3	4
November	Squash 5 tourney	1421 6 paper due	7	Kids' 8 Dentist	9	1211 10 Test #2	EXTRA 11 HOURS
	12	1421 13 outline due	REGISTER 14	15	16 1431 test	17	AT 18
	Squash 19 Tourney	20	School 21 conference	1421 22 paper due	Holiday 23	Holiday 24	WORK 25
	26	1211 27 paper due	28	29	1431 test 30	1421 1 Quiz	2
December	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	10	1211 11 FINAL	12	13	14	15	16

Follow these suggestions when making a time schedule:

1. Your first schedule should show how you presently spend your time.
2. Review the first schedule and determine if you have allotted enough time for your regular activities; for example: classes, study, work, jogging, child care, etc.
3. Schedules are very much an individual matter. They will differ between people. Schedule activites when they are best for you; for example, if you study math best during the morning, schedule it then.
4. Schedules are not fixed in stone. If you find that a particular schedule is not working for you or you cannot follow it, change it.
5. Schedules are to be changed, not eliminated.
6. When designing a schedule, establish regular habits. For instance, studying math for one hour after class each day in the Math Skills Center is preferable to studying it for one hour one day in the library, another hour the next day at home, etc.
7. Follow a schedule as much as possible, but realize that at times circumstances will prevent you from following it. However, it is important that you get back on the schedule as soon as possible.
8. A time schedule is a plan of how you wish to spend your time. It should eventually give you more freedom rather than be restrictive. It should help you get the most out of your days.
9. Do not get discouraged with scheduling your time. If you need assistance, seek out a counselor in the Counseling and Student Development Center, Room 10, Nicholson Hall.
10. GC students are busy people and busy people need to plan their time. Hopefully, these guidelines will help you plan your days more effectively with subsequent benefits to you.

Naturally, your schedule is your own business, not ours. These suggestions are just that--our suggestions. Your own interest in school, your own lifestyle, your own values will all determine how careful you are in planning your time. But as we said earlier, when you take on the commitment of college, something's got to give!

TEXTBOOKS - WHY READ WHEN YOU CAN R E A D

Sometimes the quickest method of doing a thing isn't the most efficient. We're going to suggest to you that when reading textbooks by the proven method we'll outline here, you may take a little more time than you are used to in reading assigments in your textbooks. But we'll also suggest that what you get out of the time spent will be worth it.

If you are a beginning student, you will soon discover what your veteran fellow-students already know: the amount of reading materials and the difficulty of reading materials differ from course to course and from teacher to teacher. In addition, you will find that different instructors will use the assigned textbooks in different ways: some will use class time to explain the reading in full; some will draw on the reading only from time to time; and others will expect you to read your text and understand it almost entirely on your own. But in any case, it's a good idea to keep these points in mind as you read--

1. Keep up to date on the reading by referring to the class schedule often.
2. If you've read something carefully and don't understand it, ask the instructor for an explanation.
3. If you repeatedly have trouble understanding or remembering what you read, try to set aside time to study in the Reading-Writing Skills Center or in the Math Study Skills Center and ask the tutors to explain sticky points as they arise.
4. Use the SQ3R method.

SQ3R

What is SQ3R? It is a proven method for getting more out of the time, energy, and money you put into textbooks. No matter how well or how poorly you read, SQ3R will help you better identify the writer's key ideas, better understand those ideas, and better remember them. Like most new skills--whether tennis, driving, skiing, playing an instrument, or reading textbooks--SQ3R will take some conscious effort at first, but soon becomes almost second-nature.

Here's how it works: For any assignment,

1. Survey the material
2. Question the material
3. Read the material
4. Recite the material
5. Review the material--in that order and without skipping any steps.

Step 1. Survey your reading material before you actually read it. When you first get your textbook, look it over carefully.

--The preface or introduction will tell you something about the author's intentions and plan in writing the book you'll be spending so many hours reading.

--The table of contents will tell you in general terms about the way the book divides material.

--If there are chapter summaries, you can use them now to get an idea of what you can expect to read in the coming weeks.

--If there are charts, maps, tables, glossaries (word lists), problem sets, or study questions, note how they are placed in the books and get an idea of how they can be used to help your reading.

When you sit down to do a specific assignment, first take a few minutes to look over this section of the book to see how it is organized and to get a sense of what this particular reading assignment will involve.

--If you are reading an entire chapter or article, note the subheadings within the chapter. These subheadings break down the material into smaller units which will help you tackle the big topic under consideraton.

[For instance, a biology text used in 1978 divides its chapter on Enzymes with subheadings of "Catalysts," "Key Molecules," "Environmental Effects on Enzymes," "Enzymes in Real Life Situations," "Summary "; a book used in Minnesota History has no subheadings, but breaks are indicated by large white spaces every few pages, indicating change in focus within the chapter's main focus.]

--Look to see whether the author has written a chapter summary at the beginning or end of the chapter--if she has, read it!

--Look to see if graphs or charts will be included, and get a sense of how they are set up and, therefore, of how they can help you understand what you'll be reading.

--Read the first sentence of each paragraph to get an overview of the main ideas in the lesson.

All of this should give you a sense of the author's "big picture" and will help you to see her train of thought more clearly. Thus prepared, you will read more profitably because you'll know where the assignment will take you.

Step 2. Questions should be formulated before you begin to read.

--Based on your survey of the subheadings or main ideas in Step 1, ask yourself what it is that you expect to learn from your reading. The more carefully you form your questions, the more useful they will be.

--Look at any Study Questions or Problem Sets in your text. These questions will be your key to the author's sense of what is important in the reading material.

--Ask whether class lectures or discussions have already touched

on these topics--if so, what do you already know about the topic? What issues do you want to clear up?

--Ask whether your life experiences have taught you anything about the topic you've been asked to study.

Step 3. Read the assignment (at last!)--read actively using these hints.

--Set a reasonable time limit for yourself to make sure that you don't get bogged down (60 minutes is about the most that's useful without a break).

--Try to separate the author's main ideas from her examples (the subheadings will help).

--Underline only main ideas, not examples.
[Hints: 1) underline after you've read a section, not while you're reading the first time; 2) too much underlining is worse than none at all; 3) underlining does not affect the resale value of your books; 4) don't underline library books.]

--Take notes as you read, jotting down key terms in the margin of your book and making a check mark (✔) in the margin next to important examples of underlined main ideas.

--If you don't understand a key word, look up its meaning in your dictionary.

--Refer to tables, graphs, charts, and illustrations as directed by the author.
[Hint: be sure to understand graphs and tables by noting their titles and by reading explanations.]

Step 4. When you're finished reading, recite to yourself, in your own words, the main points of the reading, answering in your own words the questions you formulated in Step 2.

--Your ability to remember key ideas will increase if you force yourself to write them down in your own words.

--If you cannot recite--that is, restate for yourself in your own words what you've learned from the reading--you haven't understood the reading assignment and need to go over it again and/or ask about it in class.

Step 5. Review immediately: look back through the assigned reading as you did in Step 1 to remind yourself of the main points and of the author's sequence of ideas. No matter how well you think you understand the assigned reading, do not skip this step.

--This is a very good time to make notes to yourself relating the reading material to class lectures or discussions.

--This is a good time to jot down those things in the assigned reading which you want to ask about in class.

All in all, SQ3R will probably add about fifteen to twenty minutes to the time it takes you to read a typical textbook chapter. But the extra time will pay off in a greater understanding of the material, a better ability to remember it, and an easier time reviewing it at test time.

NOTES ON NOTETAKING - WHAT TO TELL YOURSELF WHEN YOURSELF ASKS WHAT DID HE SAY THAT WAS WORTH LISTENING TO

Did you know that research shows that a month from now you are likely to remember no more than 10% of the lecture you heard in class today? That means that on a test you'll have about one chance in ten of recalling information correctly to answer a question--that is, unless you record in a usable way and then review the content of that lecture.

And that's what this section will help you do: come up with a workable method of storing class information so that it makes sense to you later. Good lecture notes are essential for taking tests and, more generally, for following the development of a course and the teacher's thoughts through the term.

You will probably devise your own most efficient method for taking class notes through trial and error. The following advice is meant to serve as a starting point or as a refresher. Your own goals, schedule, and study habits will lead you to variations most suitable to you. But do try this model, at least at first, and go on from there.

Keep in mind the purpose of lecture notes: to capture in an economical way the content of a class in a form that will be clear to you weeks (or even months) later, in a form which will assist you in re-capturing the content of the class long after the session has been completed. What's adequate for tomorrow's quiz may not be adequate for next month's final exam. More specifically: be thorough, be careful, be accurate.

1. Be in class and be there a little early.

   --During the few minutes before class begins, look over the previous day's notes to get a sense of where today's class will lead.

   --Most lecturers move their classes in an orderly way. If you miss the first five minutes, chances are you'll miss the main point under discussion because this main point will have been introduced at the start of the presentation.

2. Sit as close to the front of the room as you can.

   --The farther back you sit, the less likely you are to hear clearly or copy correctly from the blackboard.

   --The fewer distractions between you and the teacher, the more likely you are to keep your attention on the topic under consideration.

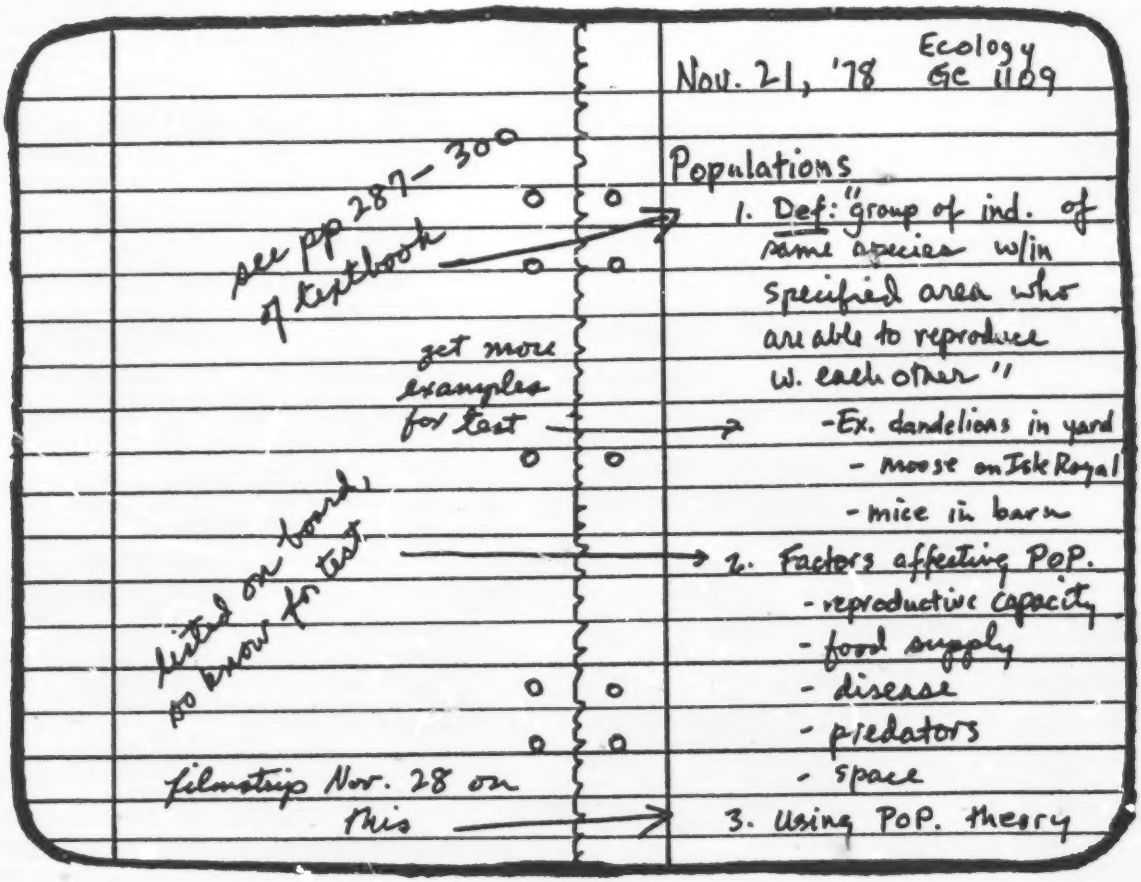
3. Use a large-paged notebook (8-1/2 x 11) and keep the notes for each course in a separate section of the notebook.

   --The large page will help you in organizing the materials to see relationships.

   --If you mix notes for course A with those from course B, you're likely to be needlessly confused.

4. Date each entry and label it (see below).

5. Lay out your notes on the page in a usable way:


Ecology
Nov. 21, '78 GC 1109
Populations
1. Def: "group of ind. of same species w/in specified area who are able to reproduce w. each other"
-Ex. dandelions in yard
- moose on Isle Royal
- mice in barn
2. Factors affecting PoP.
- reproductive capacity
- food supply
- disease
- predators
- space
3. Using PoP. theory
see pp 287-300 of textbook
get more examples for test
listed on board, to know for test
filmstrip Nov. 28 on this

--Use only the right side of your open notebook for lecture notes, as shown. Save the left side for further notes to yourself from reading, discussion groups, and review.

--As much as possible, keep main ideas separated from the examples and definitions. In the example here, the most important ideas are farther left; less important or supporting ideas move to the right.

6. Listen actively.

--If you're listening and miss a main point, raise your hand and politely ask for a repeat of what was said.

--Carefully note those things written on the board, projected on a screen, or listed in study guide sheets.

--Be aggressive. Listen and look for clues to emphasis or other signals which let you know that something important is being said.

- "The chief cause of..."
- "To summarize, then..."

- "Another important aspect of..."
- "You've raised a very good point. Let me explore it..."
- "In conclusion..."

--Stay on the ball. Watch for and listen for gestures which help you feel when something is especially important (each instructor seems to have a few).

- change in pace or tone of voice
- raised index finger
- long pauses before a statement

7. When class is over, stay put for a few minutes to go over your notes, to finish any incomplete sections, to make further notes to yourself in the left-hand page, to check spelling of terms on the board, etc.
8. Go over your notes now and then, at least every two weeks, to keep track of the key ideas in the course. This will make test-time less of a chore and will help you recall main ideas as well as examples.

If your class is a discussion-based class or a laboratory section rather than a lecture-based class, you'll still want to take notes using these general guidelines. You'll find that discussions usually come around to a few main points and that some students' comments are more worth remembering than others'. Discussion notes tend to be less "tidy," so you'll want to be sure to do more after-class sorting out and organizing than you might do for a lecture.

Whatever the format of a class, however, you should get from it all you can in an organized way. Accurate notes are the best way to make sense of thirty or forty classroom hours when you sit down to review for a final exam!

EXAMS/TESTS/QUIZZES—WHAT YOU DON'T KNOW CAN AND PROBABLY WILL HURT YOU

Most courses you take at the University will involve quizzes and examinations. This section will suggest ways for you to prepare for them and outline the most common types of test questions.

Preparation

No matter what your opinion of tests might be, they are one method by which you and your instructor can evaluate how well you are performing in a class. Rather than becoming overly anxious and concerned about examinations, use them to your advantage. Learn how to take tests and prepare for them. We believe that successful test takers are simply those who know how to (and take the time to!) adequately prepare for examinations. The preparation includes both academic and psychological preparation.

Academic preparation. You should begin to prepare for any quiz or examination in a course the first day of the course and continue the preparation on a regular basis throughout the course. Follow these basic guidelines.

—Know when the quizzes and examinations are going to be given and enter these dates on your quarterly calendar. When appropriate, enter the dates on your daily/weekly calendar. (See chapter 1 of this booklet)

--When given the examination dates, ask the instructor what type of test questions will be asked (for example: essay, true and false, multiple choice, etc.). Knowing this information will help you better prepare for them.

--Review your course material on a regular basis. Prior to each class, review the material from the previous class, and after each class, review the material just presented. At the end of each week, review the total week's work in your classes. Developing habits of reviewing course material regularly will keep you up-to-date in your classes and will eliminate the need for last minute exam cramming (though a general review of class material is a very good idea a day or two before a test). It will also keep you prepared for any surprise quizzes. If review sessions are scheduled in class, come armed with questions you want cleared up. The only stupid questions are the ones you don't ask.

--Avoid last minute cramming for exams. Staying up all night the night before an exam or leaving most of your studying for the day of the exam is a sure formula for failure and frustration. The cramming method may work occasionally for you, but in the long run you will not remember the information studied or perform very well. Cramming also does havoc with your nervous system as you attempt to learn in a few hours what should have been learned over several days or weeks.

Psychological preparation. Psychological preparation for an exam refers to being mentally and emotionally ready and confident before and during the examination. Psychological preparation is very much related to academic preparation. In fact, one of the best ways to become psychologically set for an exam is to be academically prepared! You should realize that most students

will experience some nervousness before an exam, and this is good, for it gets you "up" for the test. However, if the anxiety becomes too severe, it can hinder your performance. While some students experience excessive nervousness during exams even though they have studied extensively beforehand, the majority of test anxiety is caused by inadequate study preparation. For those students who repeatedly experience much test anxiety even though they study adequately, counseling approaches are available to help correct the difficulty. Some basic guidelines to prepare psychologically for an exam:

--Prepare academically for the exam as discussed above and as your instructor might suggest.

--Avoid last minute cramming. Leave plenty of time on the day of the exam for unexpected emergencies (for example: car breakdown, sick child, bad weather, etc.). Do not rely on the day of the exam for major study.

--Arrive at your exam room a few minutes early to either review notes or relax. Make sure you have any needed materials to write the exam (pens and pencils, eraser, paper, compass, etc.).

--Take a few minutes before the start of the exam to relax your body and clear your mind. Relax by closing your eyes and taking several deep breaths while letting your thoughts flow in and out. Concentrate on your breathing as it becomes slow and regular. Be aware of any tension in your body and go to that area mentally to relax the muscles. This short exercise, especially if it is practiced daily, should help to relax your body. Further training in relaxation techniques can be obtained through the GC Counseling Office, 10 Nicholson Hall.

--If you believe that you need assistance with test taking anxiety, the GC Counseling Office, 10 Nicholson Hall, can provide help.

--When you first get your exam paper, review it quickly and set up a time schedule for answering each question. Answer those that you know first. Do not panic if you do not know the first question; go on to a question you can answer. Do not dwell too long on any one question.

--Read the directions for the total exam carefully. Read each exam question carefully.

--Avoid any contact with other students which could be interpreted as cheating.

--Do not panic when others begin to finish the exam and leave the testing room. Use the entire test time. Check your answers carefully.

Types of Test Questions

There are several different types of test questions. Any examination may include all or some of them. Students should know that the Reading and Study Skills Center in Eddy Hall has a file of past examinations which instructors throughout the University have given in various courses. You can use these exams to familiarize yourself with the types of exams professors give and also

use them as practice for the actual exam. You should make use of this exam file especially if you have no experience with tests.

Multiple choice questions. In this type of question, you must choose the correct answer from a number of alternatives given. For example:

(1) Rod Carew is a member of the: (a) Minnesota Kicks, (b) Minnesota Twins, (c) Minnesota Vikings, (d) Minnesota North Stars.

(2) John Travolta recently starred in: (a) The Sting, (b) Star Wars, (c) Saturday Night Fever, (d) Jaws 2.

(3) The mascot of the University of Minnesota is: (a) panda bear, (b) lion, (c) squirrel, (d) none of the above.

In questions 1 and 2 above, the correct answer (1-b and 2-c) is one of the responses. In question 3, the correct response is not listed, so the correct answer is d.

Hints for answering multiple choice questions:

--Follow directions as to how you should record your answer. Do you record it on a separate answer sheet, underline the correct answer, circle the correct answer, or place the answer in the space provided? Make sure you record your answer clearly, especially on the separate answer sheets, which are often machine-scored. Do not leave stray marks on the answer sheet and erase completely any changed answers.

--If you are not sure of an answer don't give up. Rather, eliminate those alternatives that you know are incorrect and select the choice which you think is best from the remaining items.

--Do not leave any questions blank. Unless you are told by the instructor that you will be penalized for incorrect answers, take an educated guess at a correct answer rather than leave it blank. By making an educated guess you at least have some chance of getting the question correct.

--Your first impression is not always correct. Do not hesitate to change an answer if after rethinking the question you believe another alternative is better. Keep track of your own record of changing answers when you get your tests back. Are you more likely to get questions correct when you change them?

True and False questions. In true and false questions, you are given a statement and asked to indicate if it is true or false. For example:

(1) All of the Presidents of the United States were elected to that office. True ( ) or False ( )

(2) Most of the Presidents of the United States were elected to that office. True ( ) or False ( )

Hints for answering true and false questions:

--Many of the hints that apply to multiple choice questions apply to true and false questions as well. Know where to record your answer,

do not leave a question blank unless you are being penalized for incorrect answers, your first impression is not always correct--check your work.

--Read each question carefully. Remember, if any part of a question is false, the whole question is false.

--Be especially alert for statements that include absolute words such as: all, never, always, none, impossible, etc. These statements are generally false, as there are very few absolutes. Likewise, statements that include words such as: often, usually, seldom, perhaps, and most, are usually true. Notice the difference between Questions 1 and 2 above. Which is true and which is false?

Matching questions. An example of a matching question follows:

Match the characteristics in Group B with the names in Group A.

Group A	Group B
_____ Gerald Ford	1. Professional football player
_____ Phillis Wheatley	2. Former president of U.S.
_____ Fran Tarkenton	3. Congresswoman
_____ Barbara Jordan	4. Early American poet

Hints for answering matching questions are similar to multiple choice and true and false questions.

--Do not leave any items blank.

--Match those that you know for certain first, and lightly cross out the ones you use.

--Check your work carefully. Your first impression is not necessarily the correct one.

Computational or numerical questions. In math and science classes you will often be given questions which ask you to solve a numerical problem. Here are some guidelines to help you answer these questions:

--Before beginning to solve the problem, have a clear understanding of what the question or problem asks.

--Think of a method to solve the problem. Look at the information or data given and think how they can be used to solve the problem. Will a diagram help to find a solution? Is knowledge of certain theorems, laws, or formulas necessary?

--Often it helps to work backwards. Think of the step immediately before your answer. How can you get that information?

--Once you have devised a method for solving the problem carry it out.

--Be sure your answer has the correct units (feet, inches, quarts, meters, grams, etc.) as asked for in the question.

--Check your answer by reworking the problem or working backwards. Does the answer seem reasonable? Does it solve the problem and answer the question?

Short answer questions. In this type of question, you are asked to make a brief statement (usually a sentence or two) which shows that you understand a key concept in the course. This type of question will usually ask you to define or identify a person, a term, or an event. For example:

(1) Who was Chief Little Crow?

(2) What was the Miranda decision?

(3) Define population:

All of the examples ask for a statement which shows familiarity with an item. You are not asked to go into great detail. What is requested is a precise statement which shows you've done the assigned work.

Hints for answering short answer questions:

--Choose your words carefully. For instance, consider these answers for (1) above:

(a) "Indian chief in Sioux wars."

(b) "Chief who reluctantly led Sioux in 1862 battles with settlers in Southern Minnesota. Was killed by whites for bounty on Indian scalps in 1863."

Both (a) and (b) show a basic sense of who the man was. However, (b) indicates a more thorough understanding of some thirty pages of reading, and does so simply through use of words like reluctantly, 1862, Southern, bounty.

--You're being tested to see if you have read the assigned material, have attended class, and have thought about the course material. Therefore, even if you cannot recall specifics, you should try to get at least partial credit for a partial answer. Thus, for (2) if you have forgotten the details of the Miranda case, an answer like "Supreme Court case--protects rights" shows at least some familiarity with the item. You may not get full credit for such a non-specific answer, but you may get at least a part of the answer credited to you.

--Be sure to spell correctly those words which are especially important. For instance, if you were to misspell species in writing the definition requested in (3) above, the instructor could interpret that as a lack of familiarity with key concepts in the course.

Essay questions. Essay questions differ from other types of exam questions in important ways and therefore require some special preparation. When an instructor asks essay questions, she is seeking not only to measure whether you have completed the minimum requirements of reading and/or active class attendance, but also whether you are actively thinking about the implications of the material, whether you see relationships among various topics in the course, and whether you understand the material well enough to use it creatively.

--Preparation for essay exams will require some special kinds of work. As you prepare for an essay test, keep in mind that instructors will focus such questions on important aspects of the course. Such tests are designed to test your understanding, not to trick you.

(1) Review textbook and class notes to see where they differ, where they overlap, where the instructor has focussed her comments. This will give you a hint or two about likely essay questions.

(2) Be sure not only to understand key terms, events, and ideas, but also to know examples of each. Knowing such examples will help you avoid vague, underdeveloped essay responses.

(3) Check your lecture notes for "signals" of importance. If a term has been written on the board several times, if a list of events has shown up on a study guide, or if you've been told straight out that something is especially important, this is a good indication that it will show up in an essay question.

(4) Create several likely questions and write timed sample answers. Since essay questions focus on important concepts and their relationships, use the clues you have to anticipate questions. Write out answers so that you get a sense of how much you can write in a given amount of time (you will usually have 15, 20 or 30 minutes for an essay question).

--What to do in the exam period. Moreso than in other kinds of testing settings, you must make efficient use of your time in writing essay tests. Therefore:

(1) Bring a watch or sit where you can see a clock.

(2) Bring two pens.

(3) When you get your test, read it very carefully before writing:

--see whether you must answer all questions or whether you must choose a certain number (we wish we had a nickel for every student who did poorly on an essay exam by answering all six questions in the time allotted for the two she was instructed to choose from those six!);

--see whether some questions are worth more credit than others and plan your time accordingly;

--mark those questions you will answer.

*If you have Notes for the General College Writing Laboratory: Handbook, 11th edition (used in GC 1421 and 1422), see Appendix C for fuller discussion of essay tests.

(4) Note carefully the key words used in the question. Are you being asked to compare two ideas; to define a concept; to evaluate a statement; to prove something; to summarize key concepts; to discuss an author; to analyze a theory? If you don't read carefully, you may write a perfectly good essay that doesn't answer the question. Look at these questions:

(a) In an essay of 200 words, summarize the genetic intelligence theories of Arthur Jensen.

(b) In an essay of 200 words, evaluate the genetic intelligence theories of Arthur Jensen.

(c) In an essay of 200 words, analyze the genetic intelligence theories of Arthur Jensen.

In (a) you are quite clearly asked for a recitation of content from a text or lecture. In (b) you are not asked for such a recitation alone; rather, you are asked to show that you know what the theories are and also whether/why they are valid or invalid. In (c) you are asked not only to show that you understand the theories, but also that you know something about how they were derived and what their significance might be.

Know what you are being asked to do.

(5) Before you write, make a list (a) of key concepts you will use in your answer and (b) of specific information you will use to explain those key concepts. This should be done quickly but carefully in the margin of your blue book or on the bottom of the examination sheet. Such a list will serve three purposes:

--It will give you confidence by letting you respond to the question right away.

--It will give you a guide to those important points you'll want to cover as you write.

--It will give the instructor a quick overview of your understanding of the question, should you run out of time before your essay is complete.

(6) In readable handwriting, begin your essay with a one-sentence summary of your answer. Then go on, following your list in the margin, to show the instructor that you understand that one-sentence summary in terms of the reading you've done and in terms of the classes you've attended. Don't assume that the instructor will "read into" your answer -- explain things as fully as you can to show how completely you understand the material.

Hint: If you have trouble beginning essays, use a rephrasing of the question as a starting point. For instance, for the question 4 (b) above, you might begin by writing: "The genetic intelligence theories of Arthur Jensen are inadequate for several reasons which I shall explore briefly." From this generalization, you would have to move on to specific criticisms of Jensen's work: "First, Jensen bases his conclusions on questionable....Second, Jensen applies his theory without considering....Third, Jensen failed to ...."

(7) Give yourself some "white space" on the page (either the entire left page of a blue book or six inches between answers) to make additions to your answer if you have time at the end of the test session.

(8) Try to finish a little early. Proofread your work. Add or change as needed.

If you've read your material, reviewed it, attended class, taken and reviewed notes, and still do poorly on an essay exam, consult with the instructor on how to do better next time. If you're preparing carefully, you deserve to do well. Unfortunately, sometimes skill in essay exams is acquired only slowly, through experience. Stay at it.

REPORTS AND ESSAYS--HOW WILL SHE KNOW WHAT YOU THINK TILL SHE'S SEEN WHAT YOU'VE SAID

Does this sound familiar? You fear writing and/or hate it. You haven't been able to get into a writing course or you've avoided them. The night before a paper is due for a course, you pick your brains for something to say. You rush through a quick list of possible topics. You choose the one that frightens you least. You think about something to say and then write a page or two and go to bed. Next day, you tear the "paper" out of your notebook and turn it in. A week later, back it comes with this scrawled on the bottom of the second page:

Dr / Vague. You have good ideas, but they aren't clear here. Check your spelling!

Even more than before, you fear writing and hate it.

If all or even part of that little scenario sounds familiar, you're in trouble. With a little coaching, a little common sense, and (if only it were easier!) a lot of hard work, nearly any student can write acceptable papers in college courses. Like most skills, this one may not come easily, but it will come if you work at it. From the start, though, you should see the problem for what it is and decide that in spite of earlier failures (and that can mean a B paper when you could and should have written an A paper) you're going to get a handle on this thing called the essay. The suggestions which follow will help you succeed once you've made the commitment to try. But only you can make that commitment.

Step 1. Be sure that you understand the assignment.

--If your instructor has assigned a paper in her course, chances are she has prepared a handout which tells you:

- the required or suggested length,
- the due date,
- any topic limits or guidelines,
- whether library research or other forms of information-gathering are required,
- suggested approaches to the paper.

Study this handout carefully well in advance of the due date!

--If your instructor does not give you guidelines for the paper or if the guidelines are not clear, ask her about the assignment until you know what is expected of you. And ask early.

Step 2. Give yourself plenty of time. DO NOT UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES PLAN TO WRITE THE ESSAY ON THE DAY BEFORE IT'S DUE.

--You might get lucky and squeak by with a last-minute-special once in a while, but in the long run such rushing is a sure way to blow your grade on the assignment.

--In general, plan at least three study sessions over four days for a short (2 page) paper; plan at least six study sessions spread over a week or ten days for a longer (3-6 pages) one. Chances are, by the time you find yourself in courses requiring papers longer than 6 pages, you'll have a good bit of experience to fall back on.

Step 3. Decide what you want to write about.

--If your instructor has assigned a specific topic, you're one step ahead of us.

--If your instructor has left the choice of subject up to you, ask yourself:

- Given the nature of the course, what interests you to the point that you want to spend several hours studying it in depth?
- About which subjects do you already have some knowledge?
- About which of the possible subjects is information available in the time you have?

--Once you've chosen a general subject area, ask a precise question which your essay will answer in the length limits you have (the shorter the paper, the more precise your question must be).

- If you have doubts about whether you can handle a subject or whether it's right for the course, ask about it.
- The reason for making yourself phrase your topic in a question is this: you must then focus on a fairly small subject to provide an answer.

Step 4. In asking the question in Step 3, you commit yourself to supplying an answer which both you and your reader (usually the instructor or TA or some classmates) will understand completely. Therefore, once you know your question, begin to jot down any and all information which will help you answer your question fully and clearly in your essay.

--Make a list based on what your experience tells you about your question.

--Check your lecture notes and the course textbook for helpful information or for suggested readings on your question.*

--Discuss your search for ideas with friends, with the instructor, with your friendly librarian, with your pets or houseplants or bartender or clergyman or whomever to see if they can helpfully challenge or add to the ideas you've already gathered.

*When you use ideas found in some source--like a textbook, magazine, library reference book, etc.--you must indicate that you are using someone else's ideas. See the next chapter on identifying sources.

--If more formal research is necessary,

- see the next chapter in this booklet for some help
- ask the instructor or TA for ideas on where to get started in making a research plan
- approach a university reference librarian with your question to get ideas about where to look for an answer*; don't be afraid of these people--they are friendly and, besides that, your tuition is paying their salary. They are there to help you.

Step 5. Rest. Relax.

Step 6. Once you've asked your question and gathered your ideas to provide an answer, you have a two-step challenge before you.

--First, you must phrase the question and a summary of your answer in a sentence or two so that a person coming fresh to the subject would understand them.

--Second, you must explain the answer in such a way that the person reading the paper will understand in some detail why you've answered your question as you have. This is hard work. You must challenge yourself to be honest and thorough.

To make your job easier in Step 6, you might want to see it as a series of smaller steps:

--Write a sentence that would explain in simple terms why you asked your particular question in Step 3.

--Write another sentence which summarizes your answer in language that will be clear to the person reading the paper.

--Decide what information the person reading the paper will have to know in order to see why you've said what you've said; jot that down.

--Sort through all of the information you've gathered together

- eliminate what's useless
- group together in brackets, from what remains, those ideas which are related.

--Ask yourself what the best order of presentation would be for the person reading the paper. Jot that down. You may have to do this several times to get it right. Keep in mind that it is not only for you that the material must make sense--the person reading the paper must be able to make sense of it.

Step 7. Take a deep breath and begin to write (no one is going to do it for you!) following the plan set out in Step 6 (your first two sentences should be done already).

--Don't stop to check spelling now.

--If you're stuck for a word, leave a blank space and keep going.

--Be sure to cover all of the points you've laid out in Step 6.

--If you find yourself running out of energy, stand up, but don't stop writing until you've finished the plan set out in Step 6.

Step 8. Rest--relax--at least over night; better yet, a couple of days.

Step 9. Come back to your original question. Ask yourself what it would take to give a good answer to that question. Jot down your expectations.

Step 10. Re-read the essay you wrote in Step 7.

--Does it seem like the sort of thing that Step 9 has called for? If yes, go on. If no, retreat to Step 6 and add what's needed.

--Have you divided your answer into a series of segments (paragraphs) that call attention to your line of reasoning or to your grouping of information?

--Are you absolutely sure of the spelling of all words in the paper?

--Are sources noted in an acceptable form (see next chapter)?

--Does the paper represent you as you think it should? Recall that the person reading the paper can form judgments about the quality of your work only from what's on the page in front of her--your good intentions and hard work are not going to get you very far unless the instructor finds evidence of both in the words she reads.

Step 11. Go over the essay one last time, preferably with a tutor from one of the college's skills centers or with a TA in the course. Others can't write your paper for you, but they can call your attention to strengths and weaknesses in work that you've done to help you improve it.

--Proofread (that is, look very carefully for oversights or dumb mistakes).

--Make any final changes that seem needed.

--Re-copy (or, if required, type) the paper to conform to the instructor's guidelines.

--Turn it in--on time!

Step 12. Relax. You've been working hard.

Naturally, you will find your own method which takes advantage of your strengths and which covers your weaknesses. For beginning writers, though, success isn't very often as easy as we'd like it to be. At first it's better to overdo it than to overlook something--you don't want to break a leg kicking yourself for making avoidable mistakes.

Keep in mind that most of us instructors (maybe even all of us) are human. Most are willing to help you if you get stuck as you write your essay, though none will do the work for you. If you're honestly trying and get stuck, ask for help. If you think you've honestly done your best on a paper and get an unacceptable grade, politely ask for an explanation. Your grade probably won't go up, but you'll know where your hard work isn't hitting the mark so that you can avoid mistakes in the future.

A final word: the two most common causes of student failure when the student has worked hard and honestly on the paper are:

(1) writing the paper so that the student himself understands it instead of writing with the idea of carefully explaining the ideas to the instructor or TA who will grade the essay;

(2) not proofreading the paper before turning it in.

LIBRARIES AREN'T REALLY SO SCARY; THEY JUST HAVE THIS GREAT INNER NEED

The Library

Sometimes your coursework will demand that you use the resources of the university library system either as part of a research report, in locating required or suggested readings, or in preparing a class presentation. There is no getting around the fact that for the beginning student (and, we admit, for faculty members, too) the library can be and frequently is a scary, frustrating, place. It's also a goldmine of information, financed by a large piece of your tuition, and you simply must learn how to use it--and, after you get over the initial fear of the unknown, learning to use the library with confidence and efficiency isn't all that hard. The following information and advice should help you get at the materials you need with only a minimum of frustration and wasted time:

1. Know what you want to find out before you go to look for it. That is, know your research topic before you begin to dig through the library.

2. Don't be afraid to ask. Even after you learn how to use the basic resources listed below, the librarians will give you advice which will make your search for information as efficent as it can be.

3. Learn what's available. The library offers instructional tours to help you get over that sinking feeling that often accompanies students as they enter the building. Call for a schedule of tours.

4. Beginning students find the following resources most useful in doing research. Keep in mind that your topic and the level of course credit will have some influence on how thorough your research must be.

   (a) Basic reference materials provide concise summaries of a variety of topics. They include

   encyclopedias
   biographical dictionaries
   almanacs
   statistical yearbooks
   atlases

   and other volumes providing short answers to precise questions. They are housed most conveniently in

   College Library (Walter Library-East Bank, 2nd floor)
   Reference Room (Wilson Library-West Bank, 1st floor).

(b) Card Catalog. In the university system, all books in the collections are listed in the main card catalog in Wilson Library (1st floor), even though the books themselves might be housed elsewhere (in the Bio-Medical Library, for instance). Each small library also has a card catalog which lists only books in that particular location (in the second floor lobby at Walter Library, for instance).

Generally, it's most efficient to use the main catalog in Wilson Library, since it is most complete and since there is nearly always a staff member assigned to the catalog to help you find what you're looking for.

There are three ways to locate materials in the card catalog.

1. By author, alphabetically (last name; first name; middle initial).
2. By book title, alphabetically (A and The are not considered part of the title--thus The Cycle of American Literature would be found alphabetically under Cycle).
3. By subject, alphabetically (always check with a librarian when using the card catalog to locate books on a subject; this can be quite complicated, though a trained person can do it fairly quickly).

Once you find a listing, simply copy the entire call number, author's name, and title, and locate the book using the guide to call numbers posted near the card catalog. Ask for help as you need it.

(c) Periodical (magazine) indexes. These indexes are designed to assist you in finding articles which have appeared in magazines (usually called "periodicals" or "journals" in the university). They are not helpful to you in locating books. Periodicals can be extremely useful to you because articles are usually

shorter than books
more to the point than books
more recent and up-to-date than books.

Periodical indexes do not contain articles. They list where the articles are to be found. Different indexes are organized somewhat differently, but in general you can find things either by using the author's name or by looking under a subject that interests you. For instance, in the July, 1969 Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature (see below) if you had looked up the subject of "Grading," one of the entries would have contained this information:

Answer to Sally: multiple choice tests. W.R. Link.
Ed Digest 34: 24-7 My '69.

Translated, that means that an article by W.R. Link with the title "Answer to Sally: Multiple Choice Tests" appeared in the magazine Education Digest, Volume 34, dated May 1969, on pages 24-27.

To locate the article, just find the magazine on the shelf--ask a librarian if you have any trouble either translating the index entry or finding the journal or magazine listed there.

Thereare two kinds of periodical indexes: general interest and special subject.

General interest indexes are a good place to start in doing research for beginning courses. They will refer you to articles in "popular" magazines of general interest and to some common "academic" journals specializing in business, technology, religion, and education. The articles you locate through general interest indexes are most often written in non-specialist language. The following are the most useful general interest indexes:

Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature (found many places--Periodical room in Wilson; Education Library in Walter).

Social Sciences Index (Periodical Room, Wilson)

Humanities Index (Periodical Room, Wilson).

Special Subject indexes are just that: listings of articles in special areas of study. These are used especially in doing research for upper division or specialized courses. They list articles which range more toward "professional" audiences. Nearly every subject has its specialty index. Most are housed in the specialty libraries on campus (Bio-Medical Library, Education Library, etc.) or in the Wilson periodical room. A few such specialty indexes sometimes used by GC students are Business Periodicals Index, Education Index, Index to Legal Periodicals, Public Affairs Information Service Bulletin, Quarterly Cumulative Index Medicus, and Psychological Abstracts.

There are literally dozens of specialty indexes. Be sure to ask for help when you think you might benefit from such a resource.

(d) Newpapers and newspaper indexes. Housed in the sub-basement of Wilson Library, the newspaper collection is very extensive and can be used for research in a wide variety of courses. Indexes similar to periodical indexes will assist you, but more so than is the case with

some of the other resources, you should ask for help at least the first time through this collection.

Plagiarism

When you use information or arguments found in library resources in your reports, papers, or classroom presentations, you have an obligation to be honest in informing the instructor or other readers/listeners (1) that you are in fact using someone's ideas or information as part of your presentation and (2) what your source of information was. You should note that you have this obligation whether you are quoting (using the very same words or figures as your source) or summarizing (using the ideas or conclusions of another in your own words).

If you have any doubts about your responsibilities in noting another's ideas in your work, simply ask the instructor or TA. Failure to indicate your sources or representing another's work as your own constitutes plagiarism. If you plagiarize and are discovered, you will most certainly fail the assignment, will probably fail the course, and could possibly be asked to withdraw from the university.

Documentation (noting sources of information)

How do you go about noting your sources? The mechanics of footnotes and bibliographies seem more mysterious than they are. In fact, no single "right way" exists. But if your instructor does not provide specific instructions on footnote and bibliography forms, you will be safe following these guidelines and using these forms.

(1) Quotes

--If you use the exact words of a source, show it by marking the beginning and end of the quoted material with quotation marks ("...").

--Each time you quote a source, show what that source is in a footnote (see below).

--If you use more than one source in your presentation, each footnote should be numbered with the source noted.

--If you have only one source, identify the source in a single footnote. After that, simply note the page you're referring to.

--Keep in mind that a research paper isn't merely a string of quotations--you will use sources to clarify or give a sense of truth to your ideas.

(2) Summaries must be footnoted

--When using the ideas or statistics of a source in your own words, you do not need to use quotation marks.

--If you use more than one source for summaries in your presentation, note each use in a footnote.

--If you use only one source for the information summarized in your presentation, a single footnote will usually be enough.

(3) Forms

--Footnotes are written in this way, unless your instructor gives you other directions:

(a) place a number above and next to the last word of the quotation or summary (like this[1]). Use [1] for the first quote or summary in the paper, [7] for the seventh one, etc.

(b) on a separate piece of paper, show where the information in each footnote came from--like this. ([1] for a book, [2] for a journal or magazine article, [3] for a second reference to a source already noted).

[1] Houston A. Baker, Jr. Black Literature in America (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1971), p.274.

[2] A. R. Roalman, "A Practical Approach to Predicting the Future," Science Digest, volume 24, Nov. 1976, p.75.

[3] Baker, p.94.

Remember: your goal is to honestly represent your ideas as your own, the ideas of others as theirs. Therefore, be careful to note when and from whom you've taken ideas for use in your work. The forms are merely a way of doing this, and you should see them for the simple thing that they are. The tutors in the Skills Center will be glad to assist you.

If you are doing a full blown research report, ask the instructor for guidance in footnoting and in making up a list of sources (bibliography). In general, such lists of sources should include the same information as footnote references. Always make bibliographies alphabetical by author's last name.

Because the mechanical elements of presenting research seem a little overpowering, many students give up on their papers. DON'T. These forms are just that--forms. They are, believe us, easily mastered.

GETTING HELP

GC Tutoring and Other Study Help Services

General College is fortunate to have a variety of special helping services especially for the GC student. These services are provided for you at no extra cost and usually on an individual or small group basis. We strongly recommend that you use these services.

1. Reading and Writing Skills Center

   located in 109 NH. This Skills Center provides help with writing, reading, and study problems. If you need help writing a paper, understanding a reading assignment, or studying for an exam, the Reading and Writing Skills Center is the place to go. Also, if you wish to improve your vocabulary or want help with a particular course go to the Reading and Writing Skills Center. The Center provides individual tutoring for undergraduate courses. Inquire at the Center about available tutors. The Reading and Writing Skills Center is open daily; simply drop in for assistance.

2. Mathematics Skills Center

   located in 114 Folwell Hall, provides individual tutoring assistance for problems with math. If you are having difficulty with either a math course or math as part of another course, drop in at the Math Skills Center and a tutor will give you assistance. This center also has available computer terminals and electronic calculators for student use.

3. GC Counseling and Student Development

   located in 10 NH, provides assistance for a wide range of student concerns and problems. The Counseling Office is staffed by professional counselors and counseling psychologists who can help you make career and educational choices, work out personal problems, improve study habits, and provide interest, aptitude, and personality testing. The Counseling Office also offers a job placement service including job-seeking skills training. The Career and Educational Resource Center in Room 9 NH, adjacent to the Counseling Office, contains information about careers, college majors, local and state postsecondary institutions, and tips on job-searching and personal development. You can use the GC counseling service by dropping in at Room 10 NH or calling 373-4400. The Career and Educational Resource Center will be open at posted hours.

4. HELP Center

   located at 317 17th Avenue S.E., stands for Higher Education for Low-Income Persons. It provides a range of services for financially needy students (including those of an academic, personal, or legal nature). The HELP Center can assist students in finding financial aid resources. It also provides an academic tutoring service for individual help with undergraduate courses. Students should call the HELP Center to locate tutors for a given course. In the past, tutors have been available for accounting, the sciences, economics, foreign languages, and math. To use the services of the HELP Center, students can either drop in or call.

REQUEST FOR REACTIONS TO THIS STUDY SURVIVAL BOOKLET

If you have used this booklet, we'd like to hear from you. Drop us a note telling us what you think. For instance,

--what parts are helpful

--what parts need to be done over

--what's here that need not be here

--what's not here that should be

Address your comments to:

Terence Collins and John Romano
106 Nicholson Hall
216 Pillsbury Drive S.E.
General College
University of Minnesota
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455

Thank you!